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BC-CA--Airport Security

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Task force recommends high-tech solutions for airport security

SAN JOSE, Calif. (AP) -- A task force representing technology and aviation companies recommended Monday that airport security be strengthened through biometric technology and video monitoring.

The group was formed by U.S. Rep. Mike Honda, D-Calif., and San Jose Mayor Ron Gonzales in March, following federal legislation that called for at least 20 airports to test new security programs and become models for others nationwide.

Since the Mineta San Jose International Airport is in Silicon Valley, the panel recommended it as a good testing ground. Their suggestions now go to federal transportation officials:

* All workers with access to the airport should have identification cards that contain biometric data such as fingerprint, hand, face or iris scans. Biometric scanners should be used at entry points to verify the workers against the ID cards.

Biometric technology should especially be useful within an aircraft to limit access to secure areas such as cockpits to validated pilots, flight attendants and maintenance workers.

* Airports should significantly expand their use of video monitoring, moving from fuzzy analog systems to more sophisticated digital setups.

The latest high-resolution digital cameras can zoom in on facial features, and digital data can be captured in real-time from central monitoring centers. Having such a video control center to monitor multiple areas is less expensive and more effective than on-location patrols, the report stated.

Also, storing and looking up video data in digital form is much easier: instead of sifting through videotape footage, digital images can be quickly obtained by searching for date, time, location, or other topics.

* Vehicles entering secure areas of the airport, such as those carrying cargo or food, should be inspected and receive a global positioning satellite transponder so their movements can be tracked and managers can watch for unauthorized vehicles.

* All such monitoring and biometric systems should be placed on a secure network so the data can be easily accessed and evaluated.

The report noted how past cases of major airline disruptions could have been avoided if the security personnel were instantly informed of a dysfunctional scanning system. Some airports now have more than 50 different, unconnected networks for voice, data, and video.

* Lastly, any high-tech solution must balance security needs against the protection of civil liberties.

On the Net:

Silicon Valley Blue Ribbon Task Force on Aviation Security and Technology: www.sjcblueribbontaskforce.org

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